

GRADUATE ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY PRO-  
GRAM AT SAN FRANCISCO STATE COLLEGE.  
(by: Georgie Lee Abel)

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high Digit Span score. Moreover, if desired, the six subtest WISC IQ could be accurately predicted from the three subtest IQ based on Arithmetic, Information, and Vocabulary.

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## *Graduate Orientation and Mobility Program at San Francisco State College*

By Georgie Lee Abel

This institution has been offering a full sequence of courses for teachers of the visually handicapped since 1948. Teachers have come from all parts of the world to study, either toward a master's degree with a major in the area of the visually handicapped, or to secure specific courses to qualify them for various state requirements to teach in this area. For several years the college has included one introductory course in basic skills in orientation and mobility for blind children and has had lectures and observations in other specialized courses where this phase of the curriculum is necessary to round out the total program.

For some time those in charge of the program have felt that a master's degree level program designed to prepare orientation and mobility instructors of the visually handicapped would be highly desirable. There were also strong requests from

teachers and administrators in the area urging serious planning in this direction. The greatest advocates of such a program were the teachers of the visually handicapped who had taken the introductory course and knew the value of this instruction for the children and young people whom they were teaching. The delay in inaugurating such a program was due to the following factors: serious problems in meeting the budget, the lack of suitable laboratory facilities with master mobility instructors available to the college, problems in making necessary curriculum changes prior to inauguration of the program, and the acute problems of securing qualified mobility instructors to serve on the faculty of the college.

More than three years were spent in studying the program by committees within the college, with State and local people and with national personnel from both education and rehabilitation. Proposals were submitted and conferences were held. After some disappointments and successes in

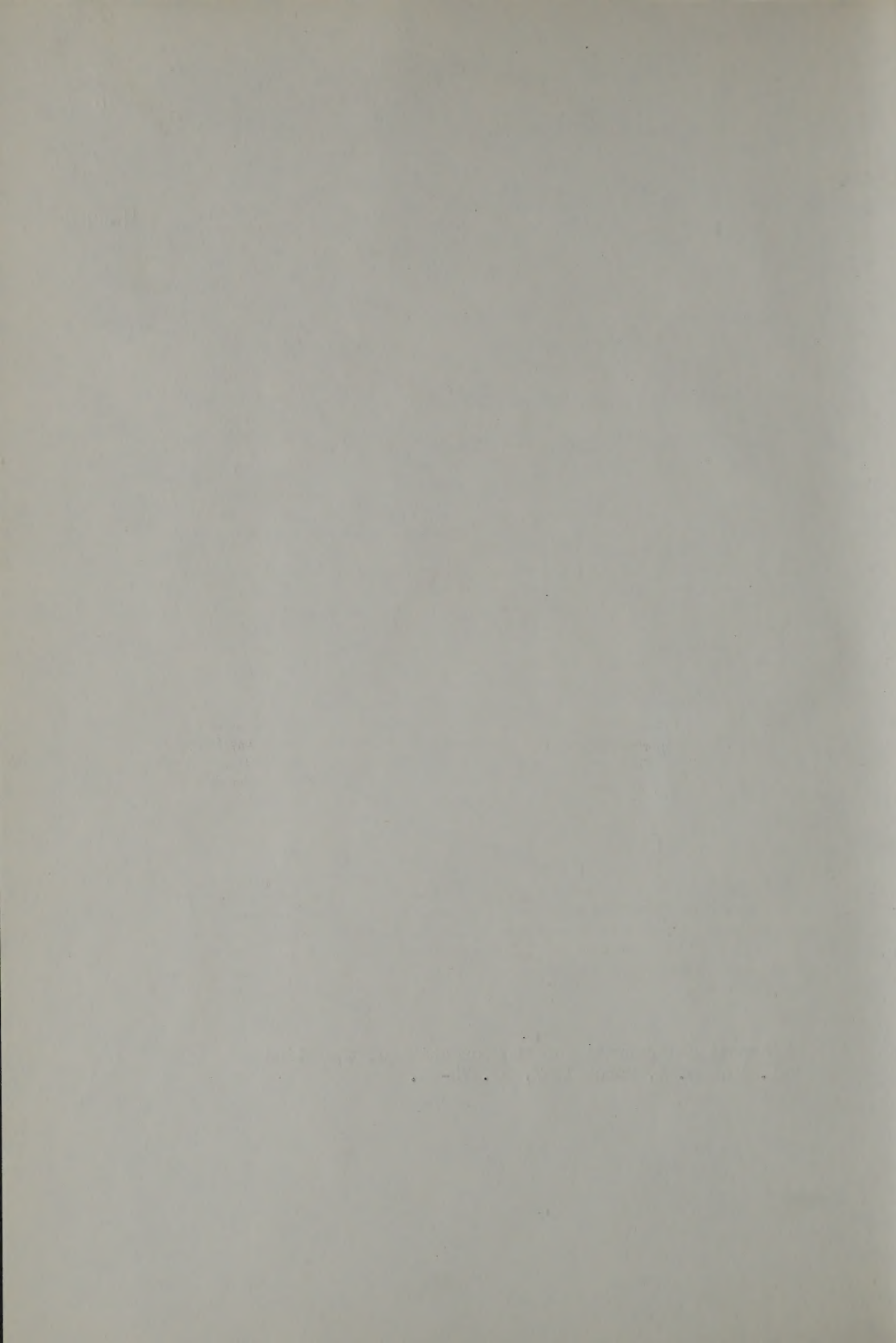
Miss Abel is Professor of Education, Department of Special Education, San Francisco State College, San Francisco, California.

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achieving financial support from both private and governmental sources, sufficient funds were secured from the United States Office of Education under Public Law No. 85-926. Without this partial support from the Federal Government added to our ongoing program, it would have been impossible to develop or carry out the program. The stipends for the students, the college support funds and the addition of faculty insured the needed requirements for a successful program. This support clarified the already existing courses and status of faculty cooperation in relation to their current responsibilities and their new tasks.

As in the case of the program for the preparation of teachers, the laboratory experiences are often most difficult to achieve and quite expensive when conducted in the best interest of the schools and agencies and according to the standards of the college. Until there were a sufficient number of schools and agencies in the immediate area employing qualified orientation and mobility instructors, it would have been impossible to offer this most important phase of the program. During the year prior to the inauguration of the program we were able to see enough potential placements in the laboratory to insure adequately supervised practicum experiences. At the present time there is perhaps no area in the United States which can offer the variety of programs for children and young adults as those which are located within comfortable transportation distance to and from this college. The economy of time for students and the safeguards for the faculty supervision are outstanding in this respect. Certainly this opportunity will be increased in the future because of State legislation and the cooperative effort and interest of both local and State personnel.

The current students are able to work under close supervision in many types of agencies and schools where there are blind children functioning, such as local schools, programs for those with multiple handi-

caps, and in residential schools and centers. We are extremely fortunate in having the ongoing cooperation in our practicum and laboratory experiences program with several local schools in the Bay Area, specifically with Berkeley Unified School District and with a number of other schools in Alameda County. We also have, as in the case of our directed teaching program, the cooperation of the California School for the Blind, where we have used their faculty members on a part-time basis as special lecturers and for directed field visits. The Orientation Center for the Blind at Albany has also been most cooperative in much the same way as the California School for the Blind. We also have located on our own campus a school for Cerebral Palsied children and similar handicaps, where we observe blind children with serious additional handicaps. There are, in addition, a number of blind college students who may request help from our advanced students, who again work under the supervision of our orientation and mobility instruction faculty.

At the present time there are seven mobility instructors with definite commitments to cooperate directly in the program from schools and agencies within the local area: three are from the Orientation Center at Albany, two are from the California School for the Blind and two are from the Alameda County Schools. Meetings have already been held with these mobility instructors and plans are under way for the practicum to begin the second semester. There are also plans for evaluation sessions to be called when desirable. These procedures are followed in the directed student teaching program and will become the pattern for this new program.

It will be seen that ours is an integrated program where we take the most appropriate courses in the existing sequence and add the new courses required in the specialized area. Certain of the ongoing courses as the following become requirements and may, depending upon the previ-





ous background and experience of the students, become high priority electives. These are: Basic Mobility Skills for Blind Children (an introductory course); Structure and Function of the Eye; Psychological and Sociological Aspects of Blindness; Beginning and Advanced Braille; the Field of Rehabilitation; the Visually Handicapped in the Secondary School; and the Independent Study Courses in Special Education which are enrolled in by the mobility students for their mastery of skills courses in orientation and mobility. There are also the observation and directed teaching or field experience courses with the accompanying seminars in which the students are enrolled in a special section for mobility instructors. All the mastery and the directed experience courses are taught and/or supervised by the faculty in this area. The courses listed earlier are taught by other faculty members where the mobility instruction students are enrolled in the same classes with the teachers and with other students throughout the college. An advanced course in mobility instruction, with more attention to more highly specialized technical aspects of the career is being developed at the present time.

Students in orientation and mobility gain their information and skill from: lecture type courses; mastery of skills which they plan to teach, including related discussions and seminars offered; observation of visually impaired students and adults working with competent mobility instructors; and directed field experiences. In the latter our students work with visually handicapped students in selected agencies and schools under the joint supervision of the local mobility instructors and the college faculty supervisors.

It should also be stated that our students have all types of opportunities to observe work in a variety of schools, agencies and medically-oriented institutions where they may actually sit in on conferences and are able to see the relationship of their chosen career in the light of real needs.

During the first semester, for example, our students were invited to sit in on a conference dealing with Orientation and Mobility Instruction held at The Orientation Center and attended only by practitioners in this area. They also participated in another conference for blind junior and senior high school students. At this meeting these young students discussed their problems and gained information from professional people from education and rehabilitation programs.

Other meetings are planned and field trips scheduled for in-state and out-of-state to provide the students with the greatest breadth of experience. National consultants are called in to sit with the students in their seminars in order to provide breadth and depth in this important area of professional service. The purpose of these meetings is to present questions and to gain information which has been substantiated through practice or research.

The orientation and mobility instruction students will also participate in conferences in broader educational areas. They have their first course in basic orientation and mobility skills with teachers of the visually handicapped, and will attend some of the meetings geared for teachers and administrators of schools. We hope through this process they will understand their role in either an agency or a school and respect the important contribution that the other direct-service persons have to make. With our strong educational orientation we hope that our graduates will be comfortable in schools and will understand procedures which will facilitate their communication with all who have a part to play in the education of the visually handicapped. Thus the Orientation and Mobility Instructor has a specific role but a cooperative one in working with teachers, rehabilitation counselors, social service personnel and others. Through this kind of understanding he serves not only the visually handicapped child or young adult but also his family where there is a most im-





portant feedback in the progress of the person receiving orientation and mobility instruction.

Mr. Berdell Wurzbarger, one of our faculty members, is a graduate of the University of Illinois and has a master's degree from San Francisco State College. He has worked with blinded veterans at the Veterans Administration Hospital at Hines, Illinois; with blind adults at the Orientation Center for the Blind at Albany, California; and most recently was chief mobility instructor with the Alameda Project, sponsored by the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration where he had excellent experience working with children. Mr. Robert Richards, the second mobility instructor, has his master's degree from Boston College and comes with former teaching experience with normal children in the state of Massachusetts, and more recently from Kansas where he was a mobility instructor with the State Department of Education Project sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education. This latter experience provided an opportunity for excellent experience with visually handicapped children. We feel the combination of preparation and experience of these two men gives our program an excellent start. Our other part-time and full-time faculty members in the area of the visually handicapped are also working closely with them in courses where they share responsibility in important committee assignments, and in the development of new curriculum.

We are pleased at the possibility of adding a new dimension to our laboratory facilities through the new West Coast area Veterans Administration Hospital in Menlo Park where there will be a program similar to that at Hines, Illinois. This new facility will add to our observation and directed field experiences where we will have, not only schools and adult and children's agencies, but also the all important hospital setting.

We feel fortunate in the availability of people in the local and state area to assist

us as special lecturers and participants in seminars and conferences. We have had parents of blind children talk with us, and have observed children with serious additional problems in an attempt to analyze their potential for acquiring independence through orientation and mobility instruction. We have also had contact with people from the areas of social work and medicine and have been privileged to observe research projects at the Stanford Research Institute and at The Institute of Medical Sciences, San Francisco.

Students who are admitted to this program are eligible for the following financial support: all tuition and college fees; adequate library service from both the College and the Department libraries; a stipend of \$2,000 for two semesters of study, plus \$450 for a 6-9 weeks summer session; and transportation costs for observation and directed field experiences. The time required for completion parallels that required of teachers working toward a master's degree: two semesters, plus a summer session. This is a crowded program, and because of this we hope to be quite selective in choosing applicants. Since we have a crowded enrollment at the college, students must apply for admission to the program before a deadline of February 1. Early applicants, all other factors being equal, will receive first preference.

In general it should be noted that the students in this program meet the entrance requirements expected of all other college students, as well as the specific types of examinations and courses required by the School of Education. They must, in addition, be in excellent physical condition largely because of the demands made on the student while acquiring his skills. They must also have vision sufficient for driving a car. It is important to furnish, either in the interview or in writing, evidence of normal vision to insure the safeguards for the visually handicapped persons who will be instructed.

At this point we feel that our students



are committed to their chosen careers. We hope that in their contacts with administrators in schools and agencies they will go into their new assignments with some knowledge of both the problems and goals of the organization with which they choose to work.

To date this is the only graduate program in orientation and mobility sponsored by the U. S. Office of Education. No doubt there will be others. This fact does not mean that we choose to operate in a vacuum. We feel strongly that providing a costly service such as this is the duty of all who serve visually handicapped persons. The emphasis, whether it comes from education or rehabilitation, should be on the quality of service which is made available through the graduates of the programs rather than from the origin of the discipline from which the service may be supported. If there is any area of service to visually handicapped persons that can and should be provided cooperatively, surely this is one. The backlog of service needed by the potential recipients is so great that

we cannot indulge ourselves in competitive feelings or actions. Great praise should be given to those who inaugurated this area of professional preparation, and it is hoped that equal praise can be deserved by those who have arrived later on the scene. The newer programs should have learned much that is valuable from the accomplishments and the growing pains evident in the early programs. While these latter programs are small, there is still time for cooperative efforts in the way of evaluation sessions, conferences and cooperative research to try to study current practices and consider carefully future improvements.

We consider the development of this program a most exciting opportunity for us to strengthen our already existing program for teachers of the visually handicapped and intend to cooperate with schools and agencies throughout the country in making available to them the type of people who we hope will provide a much needed service to the visually handicapped for whom they are responsible.

## *Dates to Remember*

### 1967

- March 8-11—Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, National Conference, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, N. Y.
- March 20-23—American Personnel and Guidance Association, Annual Meeting, Adolphus Hotel, Dallas, Texas.
- March 26-April 1—CEC 45th Annual International Conference, Chase Park Plaza, St. Louis, Mo.
- April 12-14—National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Annual Meeting, Christopher Inn, Columbus, Ohio.
- May 4-7—National Braille Association, 9th National Conference, Marriott Motor Hotel, Saddlebrook, N. J.
- May 3-6—The National Association for Gifted Children, Annual Meeting, Hartford, Conn.
- May 15-20—American Association on Mental

Deficiency, Annual Meeting, Denver-Hilton Hotel, Denver, Colo.

June 25-July 1—American Association of School Librarians and American Library Association, Annual Meeting, San Francisco, Calif.

July 9-14—AAWB Annual Convention, Deauville Hotel, Miami Beach, Fla.

August 21-26—International Conference of Educators of Blind Youth (ICEBY), Fourth Quinquennial Meeting, Perkins School for the Blind, Watertown, Mass.

November 1-4—CEC Regional Conference, Saskatchewan Hotel, Regina, Canada.

### 1968

- April 16-20—CEC 46th Annual International Conference, New York, N. Y.
- June 23-27—AAIB 49th Biennial Conference, The Royal York Hotel, Toronto, Canada.





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Abel, Georgie Lee

AUTHOR

GRADUATE ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY

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